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Creating Workforce Development Systems That Work:

An Evaluation of the Initial One-Stop Implementation Experience

Final Report
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SECTION A
INTRODUCTION

A. INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF THE ONE-STOP INITIATIVE

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has undertaken an initiative to promote the transformation of workforce development services into a system of One-Stop Career Centers. The overall objective of the One-Stop initiative is to unify the "patchwork" of categorical programs into a single workforce development system. Specific objectives of the federal One-Stop initiative include the following:

- *Universal access*: The design and delivery of core workforce development services universally accessible to all individual and employer customers, regardless of their eligibility for specific categorical programs.
- *Customer choice*: The transformation of the bureaucratic maze of categorical workforce development programs into a customer-driven system that allows job-seeker and employer customers to select services and service-delivery modes appropriate to their individual needs and interests.
- *Service integration*: The integration of the planning, design, and delivery of services across multiple funding streams and agencies to create a system of services that is seamless from perspective of the customer.
- *Outcome accountability*: The development of new system-level accountability mechanisms, including measures of customer satisfaction, to ensure that the system is driven by efforts to improve outcomes for worker and employer customers.

Although experimentation with One-Stop models has been underway in some states and local areas for over a decade, DOL promoted widespread One-Stop planning and implementation of these systems by awarding a series of One-Stop planning and development and implementation grants to states. By the end of Fiscal Year 1995, the U.S. Department of Labor had awarded 3-year implementation grants to 16 states, 18-month grants for the development of local One-Stop Learning Laboratories to 10 local areas (some of which were within states that also received implementation grants), and 12-month planning and development grants to 27 states to support the creation of interagency partnerships and plans for One-Stop career center systems.

The One-Stop Career Center initiative is continuing to expand, both within existing implementation states—as local partnerships start up additional One-Stop career centers and make self-access services available to home and business users through remote dial-in or Internet access—and through the designation of new implementation states. In January 1997, DOL announced that another 17 states would receive One-Stop implementation grants by July 1997, bringing the total number of implementation states to 33. When fully operational, One-Stop career centers in these 33 states are expected to serve 80% of the nation's civilian labor force. In addition, activities designed to further the goals of the One-Stop initiative have been undertaken even among the 21 states and territories that have not yet received formal One-Stop implementation assistance from the federal government.

To receive One-Stop implementation funds, states and local sites must demonstrate that their new systems will include the state and local agencies responsible for the following Department of Labor programs: (1) the Employment Service; (2) Unemployment Insurance; (3) federal employment and training programs for economically disadvantaged youth and adults under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Title II; (4) dislocated worker services, including services funded under JTPA Title III; (5) the Senior Community Service Employment Program funded under Title V of the Older Americans Act; and (6) Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS), including separate funding streams for all veterans and disabled veterans.

In addition, the Department of Labor encourages states and local areas to involve a wide variety of additional workforce development and human services agencies in the coordinated planning and consolidated delivery of services. Examples of these additional partners include vocational rehabilitation and other programs for individuals with disabilities; adult basic education and literacy programs; secondary and post-secondary vocational education programs; welfare-to-work programs targeted to recipients of time-limited cash assistance for families with dependent children (TANF), Food Stamps, and state-funded general relief; and economic development agencies.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

DOL funded Social Policy Research Associates to evaluate the state and local One-Stop systems in the first nine states that received One-Stop implementation grants. The Evaluation of the One-Stop Career Center System had three major objectives:

- Assessing the progress of the initial nine implementation states in planning One-Stop systems and developing policies to support the implementation of these systems.
- Assessing the implementation of local One-Stop centers operating in a wide range of environments.
- Identifying the key factors that have facilitated or impeded efforts by emerging One-Stop systems to meet the four federal objectives as well as the individual objectives of state and local areas.

To accomplish these evaluation objectives, we developed a qualitative evaluation that included extensive site visits to collect information about One-Stop planning, design, implementation, and preliminary outcomes in the 9 states receiving first-round implementation funds and in 14 local sites within those states.

Exhibit A-1 summarizes the key features of the local sites that were included in our sample. We selected two local sites in five states, and one local site in each of the remaining four states. The sample was chosen to represent One-Stop systems that were operating in varying local contexts. For example, we selected four sites located in rural areas, four in urban areas, four in suburban areas, and two in urban or suburban areas that drew customers from surrounding rural areas as well. The sites were also selected to represent a variety of potential organizational models: eight sites represented consortia between numerous partner agencies; four sites represented joint leadership between two partner agencies, and two sites represented other organizational arrangements.

State-Level Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative and quantitative data on state One-Stop designs, planning process, early implementation experiences, and preliminary outcomes were collected through intensive site visits to the nine states receiving first-round implementation grants. During these state-level site visits, we conducted structured discussions with a wide range of respondents responsible for policy guidance, administration, and implementation of the One-Stop initiative in their states. We also spoke with

Exhibit A-1 (page A-4)

Exhibit A-2 (page A-5)

representatives from public agencies or organizations not participating in the One-Stop initiative.

Guided by written protocols developed for a variety of state-level respondents, we explored the state role in developing and overseeing One-Stop implementation across the nine implementation states. Among the key research questions we examined during the state-level site visits were the following:

- What do the organizational structures and state and local governance arrangements look like in each state, and how do these vary across the initial nine states?
- What types of information infrastructures have states developed to support One-Stop implementation? How do these vary across states? How have states addressed the challenge of integrating or sharing client-level information across workforce development partners? How have they addressed cost-sharing?
- How do the service designs vary across each of the nine implementation states? Have states mandated core services to be provided in all One-Stop Centers? What are these services? Which states have taken the lead in developing automated products designed to support service delivery? Which have supported the local sites in securing products that best meet the service needs of their local customers?
- How have states integrated the four federal themes—universality, customer choice, integration, and accountability—into their designs? How have they supported the efforts of local sites to address these issues?
- What have been the key challenges in One-Stop implementation? How have states addressed these challenges?

These visits were supplemented by reviews of written materials including state One-Stop implementation plans, quarterly progress reports submitted to DOL, materials developed to support various aspects of One-Stop system building, and preliminary information on customer satisfaction and outcomes. Using the results of our data collection, we prepared case-study narrative profiles for each of the nine One-Stop states we visited.

Local-Level Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative and quantitative data on local One-Stop designs, planning, and implementation were also collected through intensive site visits to the 14 local sites in our sample. During the local-level site visits, we conducted in-depth discussions with key individuals involved in the local planning and implementation of the One-Stop initiative, as well as staff from agencies or community-based organizations not participating in the local One-Stop system. Respondents included local managers and administrators responsible for implementing various aspects of system change linked to the One-Stop initiative, staff responsible for providing One-Stop services to individual and employer customers, and staff of various partner agencies coordinating their services with the local One-Stop centers or operating parallel initiatives such as school-to-work or welfare reform.

In addition, we held discussions with diverse groups of One-Stop Center customers, both employers and individuals, to learn about their experiences with the new workforce development systems in their areas. These focus groups included customers who had used public sector employment and training programs to access services prior to One-Stop implementation, as well as customers who were new to the system.

Among the key questions we examined during these visits to local One-Stop Centers were the following:

- Who are the *partner agencies and programs* represented at the One-Stop Centers and what are their respective roles? When and how were these relationships established? Is there a local governing body responsible for oversight of local One-Stop system building?
- What types of *management or information infrastructures* have local sites developed for sharing information across partner programs and agencies represented in One-Stop centers? Have local sites developed cost-sharing agreements?
- How has the *local service design* evolved and how have services and delivery systems changed as a result? How have One-Stop partners used automated systems and improved technology to improve services to customers? How have local sites attracted new customers?
- How have local One-Stop centers integrated the *four federal themes*—universality, integration, customer choice, and accountability—into their local designs? How have states influenced the operationalization of these themes?
- What have been the *key challenges in One-Stop implementation*? How have local sites addressed these challenges?

These discussions, in addition to the written materials we collected at each local site, were used in the development of local-level profiles that describe the implementation experiences of the 14 local case study sites.

OVERVIEW OF FINAL REPORT

This report presents our analysis of the progress that states and local sites have made in implementing their One-Stop Career Center systems. This report is organized into three major sections:

- *State and local organization and governance*. This section includes two chapters that address overall system development and the creation of effective state and local One-Stop partnerships.
- *Development of the infrastructure to support One-Stop systems*. This section includes six chapters that examine the ways that states and local sites have developed sub-systems to support their One-Stop centers. These sub-systems include physical facilities, information systems, staff capacity-building systems, financing agreements, marketing strategies, and performance measurement systems.
- *Service design and delivery*. This section includes two chapters on services designed for individual and employer customers.

The conclusion reviews progress made to date in meeting the objectives of the U.S. Department of Labor's One-Stop Career Center Initiative, including the progress in meeting the four federal themes, and discusses current challenges and next steps in enhancing One-Stop services and delivery systems nationwide.

A separately bound Appendix to the Final Report includes the state and local profiles describing the One-Stop implementation experiences of each of the 9 state and 14 local study sites.

In addition to the Final Report, which is intended primarily for workforce development policy-makers, planners and program administrators, we are also developing a separately bound *Practitioners' Guide,* which is intended for the expanding community of One-Stop practitioners who provide services to customers. This guide will focus on the challenges in developing customer-oriented services in a One-Stop environment and provide detailed examples of the different strategies case-study sites have used to address these challenges.